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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TBILISI 000593

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/24/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [KBTS](#) [GR](#) [RS](#) [GG](#)

SUBJECT: GEORGIA: OSCE CIO BAKOYANNIS BRINGS LITTLE TO
TBILISI

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Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. In a March 23 visit to Tbilisi, OSCE Chairman-in-Office Bakoyannis reviewed progress in negotiating a new OSCE mandate for Georgia with Foreign Minister Vashadze. According to Georgian MFA and OSCE staff, Bakoyannis praised Georgia for its flexibility both privately and publicly, but offered no new ideas, saying that she is waiting for Russian feedback. Vashadze expressed his approval of the current Greek proposal, even offering to sign it on the spot, but urged Bakoyannis to push for resolution of the process, both to put pressure on the Russians and to give sufficient time to plan for an alternate scenario, should no new mandate be approved. Bakoyannis said she had no alternate scenario; her goal is to focus all her energy on a renewed mandate. On March 24, post received word of a new Greek proposal that apparently incorporates Russian comments on the previous version. In a later conversation, Vashadze told the Ambassador this new proposal was completely unacceptable and said it was time to bring the process to a close based on the proposal he discussed with Bakoyannis. He also suspected the Russians are seeking to kill the OSCE and possibly the Geneva process, with a view to focus on the UN and their Security Council veto. End summary.

MFA: NOTHING NEW

12. (C) MFA Director of International Relations Sergi Kapanadze told EmbOff that Cio Bakoyannis brought nothing new to her March 23 meeting with FM Vashadze. She told the minister that she was waiting for feedback from the Russian side on the Greek proposal from the previous week, which Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov promised her within a few days. Kapanadze said Vashadze made clear that the Georgians could accept the Greek proposal, even offering to sign it right then and there. Vashadze also urged Bakoyannis, however, to push for resolution of the process and not to allow the Russians to drag it out indefinitely. Kapanadze explained that the Georgians would be willing to consider Russian comments on the Greek proposal, and in fact (despite his minister's offer to sign on the spot) had a few comments of their own, but they would not be willing to consider a new proposal from the Russians.

13. (C) Kapanadze added that it was important to push for a conclusion of the process for two reasons. First, it would put pressure on the Russians to take a position. Second, should the effort to renew the mandate fail, it would provide sufficient time for an alternate scenario to be worked out. According to Kapanadze, however, Bakoyannis made clear to Vashadze that she currently has no such "Plan B" -- that her focus is on achieving a compromise mandate. She also said

she would try to be as flexible as possible and exhaust all avenues in achieving that compromise. She added that she hoped to reach some kind of resolution by April 15.

14. (C) Kapanadze noted that several "Plan B" ideas were circulating in Vienna, such as running programs in Georgia through ODIHR, or through the High Commissioner for National Minorities, or through a restructured Economic Recovery Program (ERP). The Georgian side does not yet have a formal position on these ideas, and it would take some time to determine which would be the most useful and then to work out a plan for implementation. The OSCE would therefore need to start such discussions well before the mandate expires in June. He thought Bakoyannis's choice of April 15 as a deadline for movement on the mandate discussion seemed arbitrary and suggested there was no reason to wait nearly another month. Furthermore, Kapanadze noted that OSCE Head of Mission Hakala has indicated that the process of shutting down the mission will become irreversible by the end of April -- so the window of opportunity for considering alternate arrangements is closing soon.

OSCE: NOT MUCH TO REPORT

15. (C) In a separate meeting, Special Assistant to the OSCE Head of Mission Matthew Goodstein confirmed that Bakoyannis's meeting with Vashadze was not too substantive. He characterized the situation as bringing us "back to square one," because we are once awaiting Russian feedback on a Greek proposal. He offered a bit more explanation for Bakoyannis's focus on achieving a new mandate: she suggested to Vashadze that closure of the OSCE mission in Georgia would have a very negative impact on the Geneva process, and that the EU Monitoring Mission could not replace the OSCE

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monitors. Bakoyannis also made clear that she was absolutely committed to Georgia's territorial integrity, and this principle was not-negotiable in the discussions of a new mandate.

VASHADZE: THE RUSSIANS MIGHT WANT TO KILL OSCE AND GENEVA

16. (C) Shortly after the meetings with Kapanadze and Goodstein, post received a copy of a brand new Greek proposal that apparently adopted suggestions recently given the Greeks by the Russians. In a separate meeting with the Ambassador, Vashadze indicated this new proposal, which does not provide for free movement for military monitors across the South Ossetian administrative boundary and incorporates Russian but not Georgian comments, was completely unacceptable. He said it was time to push for a final conclusion of the negotiations based on the proposal he discussed with Bakoyannis. He also reported hearing from French sources a readout of a recent conversation between Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Karasin and the French political director in Moscow, in which Karasin skipped past a discussion of the OSCE to focus on the UN mandate. Vashadze told the Ambassador he suspects the Russians may be looking to kill not only the OSCE mission, but the Geneva process as well, to focus solely on the UN, where they have a Security Council veto.

COMMENT: HERE WE GO AGAIN

17. (C) Despite Bakoyannis's declared commitment to territorial integrity, it seems her focus on exhausting all avenues to achieve a compromise, combined with the Georgians' continued flexibility, has enabled the Russians -- who do not respect Georgia's territorial integrity -- to maintain the upper hand in the negotiations.

TEFFT